

REGIONAL RESPONSE TEAM / NORTHWEST AREA COMMITTEE (RRT/NWAC)
PUBLIC SESSION MEETING
Day 1, FEBRUARY 1, 2006
MEETING MINUTES

LOCATION: Holiday Inn, Everett, Washington

PARTICIPANTS: Attendance list.

PUBLIC SESSION AGENDA

- 1:00 - 1:10 Welcome by Hosts Washington Department of Ecology (David Byers) and US Coast Guard Sector Seattle (Captain Steve Metruck)
- 1:10 - 1:30 Overview of the RRT/NWAC and the Northwest Area Contingency Plan (Beth Sheldrake, EPA)
- 1:30 – 4:30 Katrina/Rita Response – Multi-Agency Coordination
- Situational Awareness (LT Ron Matthews, USCG; 30 min)
 - Overall NRP Organizational Structure (Ron Britton, FEMA; 30 min)
 - ESF-10, Oil and Hazardous Materials Unified Command, Louisiana (Beth Sheldrake, EPA; 1 hour)
 - Open Discussion on Multi-Agency Response in the Northwest

WELCOME / INTRODUCTIONS

Beginning at 1:14 Dave Byers (Ecology) and Capt. Steve Metruck (USCG Sector Seattle) welcomed everyone to the RRT / NWAC meeting in Everett, Washington. Members of the audience then introduced themselves.

OVERVIEW OF THE RRT / NWAC AND THE NW AREA CONTINGENCY PLAN

Beth Sheldrake (USEPA) provided a presentation that detailed the authorities and responsibilities of the RRT/NWAC. She explained the creation of the National Response Plan (NRP) and how it builds upon response authorities provided in the National Contingency Plan (NCP). Ms. Sheldrake outlined the role of the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) and the authority he/she possess in responding to releases and threats of release. She explained that the NCP mandates that each region create an Area Contingency Plan.

Ms. Sheldrake went on to further explain the elements of the Contingency Plan from the local to federal level, outlining how the system is activated from the local level to the national level. She then described how the individual Workgroups function and how the Steering Committee directs specific Workgroups to work on certain issues. She focused on three new Workgroups: Logistics, Communications and Public Outreach, and Wildlife.

It is expected that RRT members will participate in the three meetings per year, be familiar both with the services offered by their organization and the Contingency Plan, and will keep contact information current so that they may be activated during a response. Some recent activations include the Bellingham Pipeline Explosion, New Carissa grounding, Thermo Fluids fire, and the Dalco Passage Oil Spill. Ms. Sheldrake also discussed the use of the RRT / NWAC website (www.rrt10nwac.com) to manage information including the GRPs and the Northwest Area Contingency Plan (NWACP), and to facilitate comments from the response community and the public.

KATRINA/RITA RESPONSE: MULTI-AGENCY COORDINATION

Ms. Sheldrake explained that although meetings typically focus on regional responses, the focus for this meeting would be the Katrina/Rita response.

KATRINA/RITA SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

LCDR Matthews gave a presentation that described the massive disruptions to the maritime industry caused by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The USCG formed a task force in the early days following the response to try to assess the overall damage to the maritime infrastructure. He stressed how important it was to have a independent organization not directly involved in the response try to provide the big picture overview of the impacts to help responders prioritize activities.

OVERALL NRP ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Ron Britton (FEMA), described that Stafford Act assistance comes in two forms:

- public assistance
- individual assistance

Both forms of assistance were exercised during the Gulf response, and Mr. Britton gave numerous examples of the assistance provided during the Gulf response. FEMA was significantly challenged to staff all the organizational structures outlined by the NRP (Joint Field Offices, National Response Coordination Center, Regional Response Coordination Centers, State EOCs, Area Field Offices, etc.)

Following the presentation there was a question about the number of FEMA employees in Region 10. Region 10 has 85 full time employees and over 300 DAE (Disaster Assistance Employees; part-time, on call personnel). At the height of the response only 7 full-time regular FEMA staff were left in Region 10.

ESF-10, OIL AND HAZMAT UNIFIED COMMAND

Ms. Sheldrake described the situation that led to a massive activation of all the ESFs and then went on to describe in detail the ESF-10 (Hazardous Materials and Oil Emergency Support Function) response which included a Unified Command formed early with Louisiana, Coast Guard, and EPA. Early missions included search and rescue due to presence of boats operated by these agencies. The EPA rescued 900 people (USCG as part of their larger search and rescue mission rescued over 12,000 people), and this stage lasted approximately 1 week. Reconnaissance was another early mission of ESF-10 which included inspection of thousands of oil and chemical storage facilities and identified that approximately 8-9 millions gallons of oil had been released.

Other ESF-10 Mission Assignments included:

- testing of potable water.
- air monitoring, flood water sampling and sediment sampling
- hazardous materials collection
- white goods (appliances) processing and collection (300,000-400,000 refrigerators to date)
- recovery of orphan containers

Some of the initial lessons learned include:

- the importance of learning to respond with little infrastructure
- the importance of learning to be logistically self-sufficient
- appreciation of the large staffing requirements such a response entails.

OPEN DISCUSSION PERIOD

Jack Wylie (DEQ) asked, “where does Unified Command report?” Ms. Sheldrake answered that the JFO is where the UC goes for money. Although Area Field Offices are not specifically described in the NRP they arose in Louisiana and Texas as a response to the enormity of the area affected. A question arose from the audience, “Could we have been better prepared?”. Ms. Sheldrake answered, “We could always be better prepared.” Another questioner asked, “Should the JFO ration resources?” The response to this question was that an area command would have reduced competition for resources. Ms. Sheldrake believes they did not use FEMA enough for logistics and coordination of ESFs. Another attendee asked, “is the EPA part of EMAC process?” Ms. Sheldrake responded that this is only a state process.

Sean Schenk (USCG Sector Portland) emphasized the importance of individual preparedness. Matt Bernard commented that “send everything” is not the right answer to a major disaster, and that needs need to be articulated specifically. Capt. Metruck asked how locals were involved in ESF-10. Ms. Sheldrake responded that they had little direct involvement because they were overwhelmed with many other issues. Local government was represented at the New Orleans Area Field Office and they would sometimes raise ESF-10 issues for resolution.

There was an extended discussion of the role of FEMA. Ms. Sheldrake pointed out that although FEMA coordinates and provides resources to a response, it is not a response organization designed to take charge.

Ms. Sheldrake led the conversation into a discussion of Multi-Agency Incident Management Teams (IMTs). Ms. Sheldrake suggested that we add to our strategic plan a task specifically to look at this issue. Capt. Boothe suggested a scenario-based review to see where people and agencies fit. Capt. Metruck suggested that a catastrophic event section be placed in the plan which simplified the plan and established priorities.

Ms. Sheldrake recommended that the Steering Committee consider adding a catastrophic event section in the plan and develop an understanding of the capabilities other agencies in the region possess, regardless of whether the organization is operating under the plan.

Meeting Adjourned at 1635 hours

REGIONAL RESPONSE TEAM / NORTHWEST AREA COMMITTEE (RRT/NWAC)
PUBLIC SESSION MEETING
Day 2, FEBRUARY 2, 2006
MEETING MINUTES

LOCATION: Holiday Inn, Everett, Washington

PARTICIPANTS: Attendance list.

PUBLIC SESSION AGENDA

- 8:30 – 8:40 Opening by Hosts Washington Department of Ecology (Dave Byers) and US Coast Guard Sector Seattle (Capt. Steve Metruck)
- 8:40 – 9:15 Navy Home Port Everett (Capt. Steve McLaughlin, US Navy)
- 9:15 – 9:45 Padilla Bay Reserve (Doug Bulthuis, Padilla Bay Interpretive Center, WA Dept of Ecology)
- 9:45 – 10:30 NOAA Coastal Response Research Center (Nancy Kenner, University of New Hampshire)
- 10:30 – 10:45 **BREAK**
- 10:45 – 11:15 New Puget Sound Orca ESA Listing – Implications for Spill Planning and Response (Lynne Barre, NMFS)
- 11:15 – 11:45 Workgroup Updates (All)
- Steering Committee
 - GRP
 - Communications and Public Outreach
 - Response Technologies
 - Hazardous Substances
 - Wildlife
- 11:45 – 1:00 **NO HOST LUNCH**
- 1:00 – 1:30 Cultural Resource Contacts GIS Layers (Rob Whitlam, WA State Historic Preservation Officer)
- 1:30 – 2:30 Agency Updates Roundtable (All)
- 2:30 – 3:00 NW Oil Spill Awareness Course Overview (Scott Knutson, USCG D13)
- 3:00 – 3:30 NW Exercise Schedule (Elin Storey, Dept of Ecology)
- 3:30 – 3:45 **Set Meeting Dates for 2006 and Wrap Up**

INTRODUCTION

At 0842 the meeting was called to order by Mr. Byers and Capt. Metruck. Mr. Byers explained that he was standing in for Dale Jensen. Capt. Metruck invited attendees to introduce themselves.

NAVY HOMEPORT EVERETT

Executive Officer Capt. Steve McLaughlin (USN) gave an overview of Everett Naval Station. Salient characteristics of this installation of interest to the audience included:

- The mix of nuclear and fossil fuel vessels at the installation
- The mix of warships and support/security vessels
- Its location at the mouth of Snohomish River
- The 110 acre footprint of the facility
- Its significance as a deepwater port
- Important species at the facility (bull trout) (sea lions)
- Permanently installed boom (9000 ft)
- Every ship in port is boomed

- Cleanup capabilities on site
- Effective artificial harbor
- Robust Emergency Operations Center
- Excellent environmental track record – biggest problem are minor topside releases

Future plans for the installation include the possibility of moving NOAA ships to Everett, the study of the feasibility of stationing a second carrier at the facility, and the possibility of installing a modular pier to replace existing old wooden piers.

A member of the audience had questions about the operation of the artificial harbor at Everett, and Capt. McLaughlin explained that the baffling is very effective. Another question was on the nature of the spills typically encountered at the port, and Capt. McLaughlin replied that most spills were light oil spills.

PADILLA BAY RESERVE

Doug Bulthuis (Ecology) discussed the ecological significance of the Padilla Bay Reserve:

- Only national estuarine reserve in WA
- Receives partial funding from NOAA
- All estuarine reserves are designed for education and research
- Petroleum traffic and processing occurs nearby
- Purchased most of intertidal area from private parties
- Possesses 2nd largest eelgrass habitat on Pacific Coast
- Many animals use eelgrass habitat as refuge in juvenile phase (Dungeness crab, salmon)

Mr. Bulthuis explained to the audience that because eelgrass is vulnerable to oil spills, the best recommendation is of course, to avoid spills. In the setting of a spill, diversion of the spill from the bay would be the best policy. Based on experiences with spill in French eelgrass beds, if an oil spill enters the bay, the best policy would be to leave the spill alone.

This presentation was followed by a general discussion among the audience regarding the vulnerability of the reserve and emergency response in the setting of a petroleum spill. Topics addressed included the value of booming inlets, and whether “leave alone” would always be sound policy. The audience had questions about other eelgrass habitats in Puget Sound, and Mr. Bulthuis described some of the other eelgrass habitats in the Sound. There was also a discussion of the area of tank car traffic in the area and the threat of petroleum/chemical spill that this might pose to the reserve.

NOAA COASTAL RESPONSE RESEARCH CENTER

Nancy Kenner (Univ. of New Hampshire) gave a presentation describing the NOAA Coastal Response Research Center. Some salient points of this presentation included:

- History – formed in 2004
- Mission- new approaches to spill response and restoration through:
 - Basic and applied research
 - Application of research
 - Strategic partnerships
 - Outreach
 - Create a learning center
- Oversight achieved through Advisory Board and Science Advisory Panel
- External grants are a major task of the organization, with an annual request for proposals

Current research projects at the Center are described at <http://www.crrc.unh.edu>. This summer the Center will have a workshop on socioeconomic aspects of spills, and this autumn the Center will present a workshop on submerged oil. The Center has also formed a Dispersants Working Group, information about which is also available at the Center's website. A report from this Group will be available on the website in March.

There was a question from the audience regarding dates for the submerged oils workshop, and Ms. Kenner responded that no dates had currently been set. Another questioner asked, "Are workshops public or by invitation?", and Ms. Kenner responded that workshops are by invitation.

NEW PUGET SOUND ORCA ESA LISTING – IMPLICATIONS FOR SPILL PLANNING AND RESPONSE

Lynne Barne (NMFS – Protected Resources Division) gave a presentation describing the history and significance of the Puget Sound Orca ESA listing. Key points of this presentation included:

- November 2005 Southern resident Orcas listed as endangered species
- Threats to this species include:
 - Pollution
 - Declining prey
 - Social confusion and disruption
- The conservation plan discusses the importance in minimizing effects of oil spills on orcas
- A wildlife response plan is being developed as part of the NWACP
- Animal specific responses might include diverting whales from spills

A member of the audience asked about the current number of whales, and Ms. Barne responded that there are currently about 90 whales. Another member asked about the causes of declining numbers of whales since higher mortality rates were found across all ages. Ms. Barne pointed out that it is often difficult to make a detailed examination of the causes of whale mortality. There was a question about the Stranded Animal Network, which is already operating, and Ms. Barne responded that NOAA makes funding available during oil spills and unusual mortality events. Another question was about animal location, and Ms. Barne stated that they are working with other agencies to improve their ability to detect animals. There was a question about the threat posed by oil spills to these animals, and Ms. Barne pointed out that there is no "smoking gun" but because of the socially cohesive nature of killer whale pods, oil spills present a great threat to killer whales.

WORKGROUP UPDATES

STEERING COMMITTEE

Ms. Sheldrake gave a presentation of the 2005 activities of the Steering Committee:

- Finalized 2005-2007 Strategic plan
- Improved website to better incorporate input in real time
- Working on 2006 NWACP revision; anticipate June publication
- RRT meeting will be combined with the Regional Interagency Steering Committee in Boise, June 20-22
- Oregon meeting September 20-21

GRP

Mr. Wylie gave a presentation on the activities of the GRP working group:

- August, November meetings

- GRPs are not published by GRP working group -- the goal of this group is to coordinate the standardization of GRP's so that primary users see consistent format between GRPs.
- Washington update:
 - Commercial shellfish bed inventory
 - Marine GRP distribution in a GIS format in ArcReader
 - Database of tribal contact information
 - Marine GRP update timeline
 - Future inland GRPs based on the 62 watershed resource inventory areas
 - Columbia River/Snake River Spill Response Initiative—identifies internal planning, response capabilities, and mutual aid
 - Spokane River GRP update
- Oregon update:
 - Yaquina Bay GRP update completed
 - New civilian GIS position at Sector Portland
- Idaho update:
 - Published two new GRPs.

Following the presentation there was a question about the origin of the GRPs. The GRPs are the result of outreach that began 12 years ago.

Communications and Public Outreach

Mr. Bernard stood in for LCDR Clark and described the current status of this workgroup:

- Just chartered
- Developing pre-JIC policy
- Draft statement of work
- Inventory of technology systems

There was a question about RPs and their desire to minimize the public relations effect of an accident – Mr. Bernard mentioned that that is why there is a desire to increase timeliness of reporting.

Response Technologies

Rebecca Post (Ecology) gave an overview of current activities of her workgroup:

- 11 people in attendance in meeting in December
- There will be a response technology position at Department of Ecology
- Interest in bringing in speakers on response technologies
- Largest issue NWACP dispersant policy: state and federal perspectives differ
- Dispersant use checklist
- Create subgroup to look at remote sensing
- Helped sponsor dispersant training workshop with 20 attendees
- NOAA updates to SMART

Following the presentation there was a discussion of dispersant training.

Wildlife

Charlie Hebert (USFWS) described the activities of this group:

- Most of the work was by individual assignment
- Completed two of the plans
- Second draft of wildlife response plan

- Workgroup is made up of State and Federal personnel
- Workshop scheduled for late February
- The absence of wildlife rehabilitation capacity for sea otters has been identified

This was followed by a discussion of wildlife rehabilitation capabilities in Puget Sound. There was a question about the status of avian flu in migratory birds and oil spill response and the setting of avian flu. Some attendees felt that setting could arise where it might not be appropriate to collect oil-soaked migratory waterfowl.

Marine Firefighting

Ms. Sheldrake explained that although the Marine Firefighting workgroup is no longer active, there were some recent events relevant to this topic. John Dwyer described several of the incidents that occurred over the last year and mentioned that there is a survey ongoing of marinas and the equipment they possess.

CULTURAL RESOURCE CONTACTS GIS LAYERS

Rob Whitlam, (WA State Historic Preservation Officer), described the wide variety of agencies with which his agency interacts. In terms of oil spills this means cultural resources can be found far from the shoreline and be potentially disturbed during a response. The office tracks thousands of sites, with new sites constantly being discovered. Among the points made during his presentation:

- Human occupation has a long history in the Northwest
- Archaeological sites are not renewable resources -- many of the artifacts are fragile and subject to contamination.
- Through a GIS, archeological links are provided to points on the map.
- Because archeological site data is not subject to public disclosure, access to the data is controlled.

Joanne Markert, (GIS Analyst, GeoEngineers) then described the creation of the archeological GIS for Washington state. Much of the information was solicited by mail and then placed on the GIS layer.

The presentation was followed by an extended discussion among presenters and attendees regarding the availability of the cultural resource information during the early states of the response. How do 24 hour response agencies access the information contained within a controlled database? One of the considerations was how much information could be released through the public domain, and to what extent existing information systems could protect archaeological information while making this information available to responders.

AGENCY UPDATES:

Food and Drug Administration

Miriam Burbach (FDA) described her agency's ongoing cooperation with the Washington National Guard

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Paul Peloquin (USACE) described the Corp of Engineers as coming back to full strength after substantial deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan and Katrina.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Dale Cavanaugh (OSHA) briefly described several training initiatives his agency is undertaking. Responder training has been progressing with a 2 day course and 4 day train-the-trainer course. The

agency has also been working with construction companies and the Seattle Fire Department to develop a program designed to integrate construction expertise into initial emergency response.

US Forest Service

David Sumner (USFS), described the heavy deployment of interagency wildfire teams from Washington and Oregon to Louisiana in the wake of Katrina.

National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration

Gary Shigenaka (NOAA), briefly outlined the commitment NOAA/Hazmat has made to Katrina, with a continual NOAA presence in the Gulf. The NOAA oil spill team continues to deal with Gulf issues. Mr. Shigenaka also noted that submerged oil spills have become very relevant issues for NOAA, and suggested that the RRT should consider the issues involved with submerged oil.

Washington State Department of Ecology

Mr. Byers discussed the busy legislative agenda faced by his agency, including the ability to acquire derelict vessels, the oil transfer rule CR102 contingency plan and the many supplemental budget requests made by his agency. A goal of the agency is to pre-position 40-60 caches of spill equipment that will supplement the resources of local communities. The Gig Harbor Fire was an excellent example of the potential of partnerships between local communities and the State Department of Ecology.

Mr. Byers then briefly described the statewide initiative to create regional hazmat response capabilities as part of the state homeland security program.

Sector Seattle

Capt Metruck (USCG) discussed the consolidation and reorganization of the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard continues to support activities in the Gulf. In the region, however, "Operation Trash Compactor" is working with DNR and DOE to manage neglected vessels by identifying potential threats.

His agency continues to work with the Harbor Safety Committee to establish better standards of care. There will be an exercise in May in Port Angeles. A new building is being constructed which will include a new command center which will enhance the ability of the organization to perform in an emergency.

Environmental Protection Agency

Ms. Sheldrake described how the Katrina response essentially shut down non-emergency response activities. However, on May 2-4 the EPA will be hosting the Freshwater Spill symposium in Portland, OR. As part of this symposium three short courses will be offered free of charge at the Doubletree Inn – Lloyd Center.

District 13

Capt. Boothe briefly mentioned that 150 people from his organization have been deployed to the southeastern US. Capt. Boothe then described the Coast Guard reorganization that has created a functionally-oriented organization. Capt Boothe mentioned that Marine firefighting and salvage regulations are back in the works and that attendees are invited to comment on these regulations.

Sector Portland

Capt. Patrick Gerrity (USCG) described the busy response schedule of his agency over the previous six months, with over 100 spill responses, 14 hazmat responses, and the sinking of 29 derelict vessels. Around two weeks ago, fire in Columbia River destroyed several vessels and released 2,000 gallons of oil. A mercury spill near Coos Bay elicited a major response from his organization.

Capt. Gerrity then described his intent to increase spill response capabilities near coast. Also on their horizon are a large exercise this year, and a 2007 TOPOFF exercise in Portland with a marine theme.

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

Chuck Donaldson, (ODEQ) described the Pacific Cascadia exercise that will occur May 23-25 2006. Mr. Donaldson also mentioned that a ship-breaking operation is proposing to locate in the Portland area. This operation would be a source of concern to DEQ.

Idaho Homeland Security

Mary Halverson described ongoing efforts to develop an all-hazards state hazmat response capability.

Federal Emergency Management Administration

Because of questions the previous day, Mr. Britton addressed briefly the organizational history and current status of FEMA. FEMA is no longer an independent cabinet level agency but falls under the Department of Homeland Security. The National Preparedness portion of FEMA formerly interacted with RRT/NWAC and the status of this portion of the program is still being determined.

Health and Human Services

Greg Thomas (USPHS) mentioned that HHS, like many other agencies present, has made a huge commitment to the Gulf region. On a different note, however, Mr. Thomas noted that there was continuing concern about pandemic influenza, and that the Washington State Pandemic Flu conference will be held 14th April, 2006.

NW OIL SPILL AWARENESS COURSE OVERVIEW

Scott Knutson (USCG) pointed out that there was increased public interest in oil spill response. Mr. Knutson described the course curriculum, the process of identifying 100 potentially interested individuals, and of inviting 46 individuals. The instructor cadre for this course consisted of government agencies and private individuals. 28 individuals attended.

The course was based both on a 40-hour course taught by Coast Guard and on a course taught at Texas A&M. Attendees included representatives from various tribes, conservation organizations, oil spill advisory committee, and journalists.

2005 POLLUTION HIGHLIGHTS

This was a repeat of the presentation of the previous day by Lt.Cmdr. Cocanour (USCG). Following this presentation there was a question regarding reliable detection capabilities for submerged spills. Lt. Cmdr Cocanour responded that reporting is the primary mechanism for the detection of submerged spills.

Ms. Sheldrake explained that next meeting will be Boise, June 20-22, 2006 and thanked attendees for their attendance.

Meeting Adjourned at 1600.